

***INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE***  
***June 23 - 30, 2011***

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**1. Gates Sends Message Thanking Troops for Service (06-29-2011)**

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 29, 2011 – Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates has sent a message to every post, ship, base and installation thanking service members and their families for their service.

In the message, which went out today, Gates said it has been “the greatest honor of my life to serve and to lead you for the past four-and-a-half years.”

The secretary retires from his position tomorrow. President George W. Bush nominated Gates as defense secretary in November 2006. When President Barack Obama took office in January 2009, he asked Gates to stay. The secretary is the only cabinet member ever retained by an incoming president from another political party.

After fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the interests and well-being of the men and women in the military has been the secretary’s highest priority. “Your dedication, courage and skill have kept America safe even while bringing the war in Iraq to a successful conclusion and, I believe, at last turning the tide in Afghanistan,” he wrote in the release.

For his whole time in office, Gates has signed the orders deploying troops into harm’s way. “This has weighed on me every day,” he wrote. “I have known about and felt your hardship, your difficulties, your sacrifice, more than you can possibly imagine.”

The secretary has traveled extensively in the past few weeks to meet with and thank as many service members as he could. He traveled to outposts in Afghanistan and Iraq shaking hands with troops and giving them his commemorative coins.

Even with the travel, "he still only reached a fraction of the force," Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said. The message is his way to reach out to troops because, "he wants everyone in uniform -- active and reserve, deployed and not -- to know he is eternally grateful for their service," he said.

In speaking with the troops in combat outposts and forward operating bases, the secretary has often choked up. "As anyone who has seen the secretary with troops can attest, I think it would be too difficult for him to deliver this message to the military without his emotions getting the best of him," Morrell said.

Gates ended his message to the troops by saying they are the best America has to offer.

"My admiration and affection for you is without limit, and I will think about you and your families and pray for you every day for the rest of my life," the secretary wrote. "God bless you."

Biographies: [Robert M. Gates](#)

Related Sites: [Special Report: A Retrospective: Robert M. Gates U.S. Defense Secretary 2006-2011](#)

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## **2. U.S. Goals in Afghanistan Are Meeting with Success, Obama Says (06-29-2011)**

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says the U.S. mission in Afghanistan will be successful if U.S. forces leave behind a country where the Afghan government and people can provide for their own security, and al-Qaida is unable to attack the United States, its allies or its overseas interests.

Speaking in a June 29 press conference at the White House, Obama said both goals are meeting with success as the United States prepares to draw down 10,000 troops by the end of 2011, and an additional 23,000 by the end of summer 2012.

"The tide of war is receding. We have shifted to a transition phase," the president said.

Even before al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan on May 2, Obama said, U.S. forces were able to severely cripple the organization's capacities and had eliminated some in its middle and upper leadership ranks.

"They are having a great deal of difficulty operating, a great deal of difficulty communicating and financing themselves, and we are going to keep the pressure on," Obama said.

At the same time he said U.S. and international forces have been able to "ramp up" the training of Afghan troops, adding an additional 100,000 army and police since he announced a surge of U.S. forces in December 2009.

The newly trained Afghan security forces will add to the Afghanistan government's capacity to defend the country and prevent a collapse that could allow extremist elements to take control of the country again, he said.

Obama said U.S. troops have also been drawn down from Iraq, with the remainder scheduled to leave by the end of 2011. Although Iraq has continued to face violent attacks, he said, it has “been able to maintain a democratic government and to tamp down violence there” without the need for American soldiers.

“We think a similar approach makes sense in Afghanistan,” he said.

“We will ... draw them down in a responsible way that will allow Afghanistan to defend itself and will give us the operational capacity to continue to put pressure on al-Qaida until that network is entirely defeated,” he said.

#### U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN LIBYA HAS PROTECTED THOUSANDS

The president was also asked about the involvement of U.S. forces in Libya, and he said they had been deployed both for U.S. national security interests and “because it’s the right thing to do.”

He said the U.N. Security Council mandate that authorized operations by an international coalition including the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates had called on the coalition to ensure that Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi’s forces could not massacre Libyan civilians.

In response, U.S. forces took out Libyan air-defense systems to allow the international coalition to implement a no-fly zone that could provide the Libyan people with humanitarian protection, he said.

“The Libyan regime's capacity has been greatly reduced as a consequence of our operation,” he said.

The president said there have not been any U.S. forces on the ground in Libya, and there are “no risks of additional escalation.”

“We have done exactly what we said to do under a U.N. mandate, and we have protected thousands of lives in the process. And, as a consequence, a guy who was a state sponsor of terrorist operations ... is pinned down, and the noose is tightening around him,” Obama said.

Obama called on Qadhafi to step down from power and “give his people a fair chance to live their lives without fear.”

So long as Qadhafi is heading the Libyan government and controls large numbers of troops, “the Libyan people are going to be in danger of counteroffensives and of retribution,” and it will be hard for the United States to feel confident that they will be protected, he said.

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### **3. Presidential Adviser Announces New Counterterrorism Strategy (06-29-2011)**

By MacKenzie C. Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama’s new National Strategy for Counterterrorism formalizes the approach his administration has been pursuing and adapting for the past two and a half years to

prevent terrorist attacks and to ensure al-Qaida's demise, Obama's chief homeland security and counterterrorism adviser says.

"This counterterrorism strategy is only one part of President Obama's larger National Security Strategy," presidential adviser John Brennan said in prepared remarks June 29 in Washington. "Our counterterrorism policies do not define our entire foreign policy; rather, they are a vital part of — and are designed to reinforce — our broader national security interests."

Those interests include U.S. security, prosperity, respect for universal values and global cooperation to meet shared challenges, according to a White House fact sheet.

Brennan said the president's broader foreign policy and national security initiatives help to achieve counterterrorism goals by addressing the conditions that can sometimes lead individuals to join terrorist groups.

"Peaceful political, economic and social progress undermines the claim that the only way to achieve change is through violence. It can be a powerful antidote to the disillusionment and sense of powerlessness that can make some individuals more susceptible to violent ideologies," he said.

The principal focus of U.S. counterterrorism efforts is "the network that poses the most direct and significant threat to the United States, and that is al-Qaida, its affiliates and its adherents," Brennan added.

Brennan called the May 2 killing of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden by U.S. special operations forces the "biggest blow against al-Qaida yet" and said that though the group is in its decline, the struggle is not over.

The United States, he said, is strengthening intelligence, military capabilities, homeland security, aviation security and a full range of law enforcement tools. Brennan added that as "no one nation alone can bring about al-Qaida's demise," the United States has partnered in the struggle with multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and NATO, as well as regional organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union (AU). He said the United States has also increased efforts to build the capacity of partners "so they can take the fight to al-Qaida in their own countries."

Brennan said that in all actions, the United States would uphold its core values, such as respect for human rights and opportunity, dignity and justice for all people.

"Guided by the strategy we're releasing today, we will never waver in our efforts to protect the American people," Brennan said. "We will continue to use every tool at our disposal, and apply them wisely. We will continue to forge strong partnerships around the world and build a culture of resilience here at home. And as Americans, we will continue to uphold the ideals and core values that inspire the world, define us as people and help keep us safe."

[Counterterrorism Adviser Brennan: "Ensuring al-Qa'ida's Demise"](#) (06-29-2011)

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#### **4. Fact Sheet: National Strategy for Counterterrorism (06-29-2011)**

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary

“As a country, we will never tolerate our security being threatened, nor stand idly by when our people have been killed. We will be relentless in defense of our citizens and our friends and allies. We will be true to the values that make us who we are. And on nights like this one, we can say to those families who have lost loved ones to al Qaeda’s terror: Justice has been done.”

-- *President Barack Obama*  
*May 1, 2011*

The National Strategy for Counterterrorism, found here, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf) [630KB] formalizes the approach that President Obama and his Administration have been pursuing and adapting for the past two and half years to prevent terrorist attacks and to deliver devastating blows against al-Qa’ida, including the successful mission to kill Usama bin Laden.

Rather than defining our entire national security policy, this counterterrorism strategy is one part of President Obama’s larger National Security Strategy, which seeks to advance our enduring national security interests, including our security, prosperity, respect for universal values and global cooperation to meet global challenges.

This Strategy builds upon the progress we have made in the decade since 9/11, in partnership with Congress, to build our counterterrorism and homeland security capacity as a nation. It neither represents a wholesale overhaul — nor a wholesale retention — of previous policies and strategies.

**Threat** — This Strategy recognizes there are numerous nations and groups that support terrorism to oppose U.S. interests, including Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and HAMAS, and we will use the full range of our foreign policy tools to protect the United States against these threats.

However, the principal focus of this counterterrorism strategy is the network that poses the most direct and significant threat to the United States — al-Qa’ida, its affiliates and its adherents.

- Al-Qa’ida has murdered thousands of our citizens, including on 9/11.
- Al-Qa’ida affiliates — groups that have aligned with al-Qa’ida — have attempted to attack us, such as Yemen-based al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula’s (AQAP) failed attempt to bomb a Detroit-bound airliner on December 25, 2009.
- Al-Qa’ida adherents — individuals, sometimes American citizens, who cooperate with or are inspired by al-Qa’ida — have engaged in terrorism, including the tragic slaughter of our service members at Fort Hood in 2009.

**Our Ultimate Objective** — This Strategy is clear and precise in our ultimate objective: we will disrupt, dismantle, and ultimately defeat al-Qa’ida — its leadership core in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, its affiliates and adherents to ensure the security of our citizens and interests.

**Our Posture** — We are at war. We are waging a broad, sustained, integrated and relentless campaign that harnesses every element of American power to defeat al-Qa’ida.

**Our Goals** — To defeat al-Qa'ida, we are pursuing specific counterterrorism goals, including:

- Protecting our homeland by constantly reducing our vulnerabilities and adapting and updating our defenses.
- Disrupting, degrading, dismantling and defeating al-Qa'ida wherever it takes root.
- Preventing terrorists from acquiring or developing weapons of mass destruction.
- Eliminating the safehavens al-Qa'ida needs to train, plot and launch attacks against us.
- Degrading links between al-Qa'ida, its affiliates and adherents.
- Countering al-Qa'ida ideology and its attempts to justify violence.
- Depriving al-Qa'ida and its affiliates of their enabling means, including illicit financing, logistical support, and online communications.

**Our Principles** — Our pursuit of these goals is guided by several key principles, including:

- Upholding core American values, including rule of law and the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of all Americans;
- Harnessing every tool at our disposal, including intelligence, military, homeland security and law enforcement, and maximizing cooperation between communities;
- Building partnerships to with international institutions and partners so that nations can take the fight to al-Qa'ida, its affiliates and adherents in their own countries;
- Applying tools appropriately, recognizing that different threats in different regions demand different tools;
- Building a culture of preparedness and resilience at home to prevent terrorist attacks and ensure we can quickly should an attack occur.

**Devastating Blows Against Al-Qa'ida** — guided by this Strategy, we have achieved significant progress against al-Qa'ida over the past two and a half years.

- We have put al-Qa'ida under more pressure than at any time since 9/11, affecting its ability to attract new recruits and making it harder for al-Qa'ida to train and plot attacks.
- Al-Qa'ida's leadership ranks have been decimated, with more key leaders eliminated in rapid succession than at any time since 9/11.
- Virtually every major al-Qa'ida affiliate has lost its key leader or operational commander.
- More than half of al-Qa'ida's leadership has been eliminated, including Usama bin Laden

**"On a Path to Defeat"** — As President Obama stated in his June 22 remarks on our way forward in Afghanistan, "we have put al Qaeda on a path to defeat, and we will not relent until the job is done."



- Information seized from his compound reveals bin Laden's concerns about al-Qa'ida's long-term viability.
  - Bin Laden clearly saw that al-Qa'ida is losing the larger battle for hearts and minds.
  - Bin Laden knew that he had failed to portray America as being at war with Islam.
  - He knew that al-Qa'ida's murder of so many innocent civilians, most of them Muslims, had deeply and perhaps permanently tarnished al-Qa'ida's image in the world.
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## **5. Clinton Praises U.N. Action to Send Peacekeepers to Abyei (06-28-2011)**

By Merle David Kellerhals, Jr.  
Staff Writer

U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice addresses the U.N. Security Council in this March file photo.

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton praised swift passage of a critical U.N. resolution that approves the deployment of approximately 4,200 Ethiopian peacekeepers to the Abyei region of Sudan.

“Abyei has been a source of regional tension for many years, as the world witnessed last month [May] when Sudanese Armed Forces forcibly took control of the region, resulting in widespread displacement and looting,” [Clinton said in a prepared statement June 27](#).

“The approval of this force is a critical step in implementing the June 20 agreement signed by the parties, whereby the Sudanese Armed Forces will withdraw from the Abyei area along with any Sudan People's Liberation Army forces there,” Clinton added.

Under the agreement, an Ethiopian armored brigade will deploy as the U.N. Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to enforce the withdrawal of northern and southern Sudan armies and maintain security throughout the Abyei region for an initial six-month period, according to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1990. The resolution was unanimously approved by the 15-member council June 27 in New York.

The peacekeepers are responsible for protecting civilians in the Abyei region and preventing incursions into the region “by unauthorized elements,” and act as a buffer between the northern and southern armies, the resolution said. The region, which produces some oil, is claimed by both northern and southern Sudan.

On July 9, southern Sudan separates from northern Sudan and becomes an independent nation. There has been nearly three decades of civil strife and conflict between the two regions, which ended through a series of agreements and referendums.

“We urge the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement to make good on their commitments to withdraw forces from Abyei and use the talks facilitated by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel to reach mutual agreement on the future status of Abyei,” Clinton said.

Ambassador Susan Rice, the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations, issued a statement from New York, saying, “We are pleased that the council acted swiftly — and unanimously — to adopt this resolution, which will contribute to ensuring that the agreement both parties reached can be implemented immediately and effectively.”

Rice added that the strong peacekeeping presence is an essential part of the security arrangements to demilitarize Abyei and create conditions for a permanent political settlement.

Clinton also said that the United States remains concerned about the ongoing crisis in the Southern Kordofan region. Tens of thousands of people have been driven from their homes because of the civil strife, and there are reports of serious human rights abuses, including ethnic and political violence targeting individuals.

“Also of concern is the troubling detention of Sudanese local staff members of the U.N. Mission in Sudan by Sudanese authorities last week as they were being evacuated from the airport in Kadugli,” Clinton said. Two staff members have been released, but five remain in the custody of Sudanese military officials.

Clinton called on the Sudanese government to release them immediately and cease any harassment and intimidation of U.N. personnel in Southern Kordofan.

Rice added that “the government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement–North must agree immediately to a ceasefire in Southern Kordofan and end restrictions on humanitarian access and U.N. movements.”

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## **6. Afghans Seeing Progress from U.S. Civilian Surge, Clinton Says (06-23-2011)**

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — The surge of American civilian workers into Afghanistan to help improve governance, create economic opportunities and support Afghan civil society has made life better for most Afghans, says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton: “We are and should be encouraged by what we have accomplished.”

Speaking to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington June 23, Clinton told lawmakers that the tripling in the number of U.S. civilian workers and development experts since January 2009 was meant to “give Afghans a stake in their country’s future, and provide credible alternatives to extremism and insurgency.”

“It was not, nor was it ever, designed to solve all of Afghanistan’s development challenges,” she said. Facing difficult circumstances in the country, the civilians have focused on key Afghan ministries and sectors and managed to achieve impressive results.

“Economic growth is up. Opium production is down. Under the Taliban, only 900,000 boys, and no girls, were enrolled in schools; by 2010, 7.1 million students were enrolled, and nearly 40 percent of them girls. Hundreds of thousands of farmers have been trained and equipped with new seeds and other techniques. Afghan women have used more than 100,000 microfinance loans. Infant mortality is down 22 percent,” Clinton said.



Afghans are seeing progress “in their streets, their schools, their fields,” and the Obama administration remains “committed to fighting corruption and strengthening the rule of law in a very challenging environment,” she said.

As the country transitions to full Afghan security control in 2014, the civilian efforts will be shifting from short-term stabilization projects that were largely tied to the U.S. military strategy to “longer-term sustainable development that focuses on spurring growth and integrating Afghanistan into South Central Asia’s economy,” Clinton said.

Clinton’s remarks came one day after President Obama announced he is removing 33,000 U.S. troops from the country by the end of summer 2012, and that troops will continue to leave at a steady pace as Afghan forces take more security responsibility.

“Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security,” Obama said.

Committee Chairman Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts said the United States has met its major goal of significantly disrupting al-Qaida and reducing its presence in the country.

“Our strategy has given the Afghans the opportunity to build and defend their own country — something, incidentally, that they have done for centuries without our help,” Kerry said.

The committee’s ranking Republican member, Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana, urged the Obama administration to more narrowly define what “success” in Afghanistan would mean in terms of U.S. vital interests and what is possible for it to achieve.

“Undoubtedly, we will make some progress when we are spending over \$100 billion per year in that country. The more important question is whether we have an efficient strategy for protecting our vital interests over the long term that does not involve massive, open-ended expenditures and does not require us to have more faith than is justified in Afghan institutions,” Lugar said.

Clinton said the Obama administration is trying to “move in a direction that will leave a stable Afghanistan.” It would not necessarily be a perfect nation-state, but would have the stability to “defend itself against both overt and covert challenges to its security,” she said.

The United States is supporting an Afghan-government-led political process with the Taliban and supports the reconciliation of Taliban who renounce violence, abandon al-Qaida, and abide by Afghanistan’s constitution, including its protections for women, she said.

“Any potential for peace will be subverted if women or ethnic minorities are marginalized or silenced. And the United States will not abandon our values or support a political process that undoes the social progress that has been made in the past decade,” Clinton said.

“We believe that a political solution that meets these conditions is possible,” and the Taliban have a clear choice: “Be part of Afghanistan’s future or face unrelenting assault,” she said.

[Obama Says 10,000 U.S. Troops Leaving Afghanistan in 2011](#) (06-22-2011)

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## **7. Joint Clinton-Geithner Statement on Iran Sanctions (06-23-2011)**

The following is the text of a joint statement by U.S. Department of State Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton and U.S. Department of the Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner on Iran sanctions.

Today, the United States imposed sanctions on Tidewater Middle East Company, an operator of Iranian ports owned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) that has links to Iranian proliferation activities. We also imposed sanctions against Iran Air, which was designated for providing material support and services to the IRGC and Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL), and also has facilitated proliferation-related activities. Today's sanctions also exposed an Iranian individual and entity for their ties to a company that provided support and weapons to Hizballah on behalf of the IRGC.

The IRGC's illicit activities and its increasing displacement of the legitimate Iranian private sector in major strategic industries, including in the commercial and energy sectors, are deeply troubling. The IRGC also serves as the domestic "enforcer" for the Iranian regime, continues to play an important proliferation role by orchestrating the import and export of prohibited items to and from Iran, is involved in support of terrorism throughout the region, and is responsible for serious human rights abuses against peaceful Iranian protestors and other opposition participants.

Preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons is a top U.S. government priority and we remain deeply concerned about Iran's nuclear intentions. The United States is committed to a dual-track policy of applying pressure in pursuit of constructive engagement, and a negotiated solution.

On June 9, 2011, the P5+1 countries (China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States) re-affirmed their concerns about Iran's nuclear program and their commitment to a diplomatic solution in their statement to the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors. Many other governments have also expressed serious concerns about the behavior and policies of the Iranian leadership and have urged Iran to change course and seek a path of negotiation. Yet, in the face of this unified international message, Iran has continued to violate its international obligations and disregard our attempts to start meaningful negotiations over its nuclear program.

For this reason, the United States is convinced that the international community must continue to increase and broaden the scope of pressures on Iran. We welcome steps such as the European Union's designation of more than 100 entities and individuals last month and the improved implementation of sanctions against Iran that we are seeing around the world.

This month, the United States amplified our sanctions against Iran's leadership through a comprehensive initiative aimed at Iran's dangerous behavior--its continued proliferation activities, its human rights abuses, and its destabilizing activities in the region.

On June 9, we sanctioned the Iranian security forces for human rights abuses. Earlier this week, we continued our efforts against the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), which the UN Security Council 1737 Sanctions Committee noted has been involved in several violations of UN Security Council resolutions on Iran.

The steps we have taken this week seek to limit Iran's ability to use the global financial system to pursue illicit activities. We have made important progress in isolating Iran, but we cannot waver. Our efforts must be unrelenting to sharpen the choice for Iran's leaders to abandon their dangerous course.

The United States and our partners remain fully committed to a diplomatic solution with Iran. However, until Iran is prepared to engage seriously with us on such a solution, we will continue to increase pressure against Iranian entities of concern.

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